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ABSTRACT

Employment and Immigration Canada explored, with potential partners, the feasibility of establishing a Canadian Career Information Partnership (CIP) network. A series of exploratory meetings was scheduled across Canada to determine: (1) gaps in information needed by youth and adults for effective career exploration, planning, and decision making; (2) effective ways to fill such gaps; and (3) the practicability of "pooling" of expertise and resources across jurisdictional boundaries. Participants agreed that the need for career and labor market information was acute, development of national and provincial career information databases was desirable, and information should be more accessible. The consensus was that career tabloids offered the most promising vehicle to short-term, high-impact success for the CIP network. Career tabloids provided an opportunity for ongoing interagency collaboration in development of a popular, inexpensive career information delivery vehicle already delivered to households and bulk-distributed to schools and agencies. At a CIP strategic planning meeting, all provinces and territories represented agreed in principle to collaborate on development of career tabloids aimed at Canadian households. The tabloid would be an all-inclusive, broad-based publication encompassing timely career information and articles and features on labor market trends, career planning process, and education and training options. Provincial and territorial CIPs were planned. (YLB)

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Career Information Partnership

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CIP STATUS REPORT

Canada's labour force is its key to prosperity in this global age. We need people with the right education, training and skills in the right jobs at the right time. At the same time we value freedom of choice, and expect individuals to make appropriate personal career choices among the myriad of options in our rapidly changing working world. At the core of effective career planning and decision making is information. More Canadians need ready access to better information. Employment and Immigration Canada decided to explore, with potential partners, the feasibility of establishing a Canadian Career Information Partnership network (CIP) to facilitate the collaborative planning, development and distribution of exemplary new labour market and career information products.

A series of exploratory meetings was scheduled across Canada. The plan was to follow these meetings with a strategic planning session, given sufficient interest among potential partners, immediately prior to the National Consultation on Vocational Guidance in Ottawa in late January 1992.

The object of the exploratory discussions was to determine:

- where gaps exist in terms of information needed by youth and adults for effective career exploration, planning and decision making;
- whether or not there are patterns of information gaps which transcend jurisdictional boundaries;
- how such gaps might most effectively be filled by enhancing current products, adopting and modifying products from other agencies, initiating new, perhaps collaborative projects;
- whether "pooling" of expertise and resources across jurisdictional boundaries is practicable;
- what, if any, short-term pay-offs might be realized through partnerships in career information development and dissemination; and
- which, if any, agencies are interested in moving on to a next level of exploration of the CIP concept.

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Discussion also touched on potential next generations of all career information delivery modes from print through video to the latest interactive computer-based information development, storage, accessing and delivery modes. Specific examples of possible short- and long-term, small- and large- scale collaborative projects were discussed. Such discussions were considered especially timely given the conversion from the Canadian Classification and Dictionary of Occupations to the National Occupational Classification which will impact career information specialists and resources in all jurisdictions in Canada over the next few years.

Employment and Immigration Canada indicated its willingness, assuming strong interest in the CIP concept among potential partners, to providing limited funding for the establishment and maintenance of such a network. However, partners were advised that if consensus could be reached on areas of information need, and on the principle of collaboration, both funds and expertise for new initiatives would have to be "pooled" by EIC and partner agencies. All partners would benefit from products which are superior to those agencies could produce independently, at lower cost.

Exploratory Meetings

Exploratory meetings, organized by provincial department of education and regional EIC career information coordinators, were held in British Columbia (Vancouver, Dec 6th), Alberta (Edmonton, Dec 9th), Saskatchewan (Regina, Dec 10th), Manitoba (Winnipeg, Dec 12th), New Brunswick Fredericton, Dec 16th), Prince Edward Island (Charlottetown, Dec 17th), Newfoundland (St. John's, Dec 18th), Nova Scotia (Halifax, Jan 7th) and Ontario (Toronto, Mar 25). Participants represented Provincial Departments of Education, Advanced Education and Training/Employment/Labour, Career Development, Industry-Education Partnerships, Colleges and Universities, Employment and Immigration (Labour Market Information, Stay-In-School and Employment Counselling specialists) and selected Professional Associations and Interest Groups.

Participants at all exploratory meetings agreed that the need for high quality and easily accessible career and labour market information is acute for youth and adults planning to enter, re-enter, progress, and, for some, to survive in today's labour market. It is felt that there are many career and labour market information products available, but because they come from diverse sources they tend to be fragmented and incomplete. Too often they are out of date, redundant and contradictory. Career resource specialists can locate needed information, but such is not the case for most citizens, especially adults. There is consensus on the desireability of developing national and provincial career information databases which provide comprehensive, one-stop sources for accurate career and labour market information, with objective reviews of all available career resources, in all media, and for all target markets. Career practitioners would also like access to an integrated career information delivery system, with authoritative, current and inexpensive career monographs, booklets, videos and computer software.

Across Canada, people would like more readily accessible information on national, regional and local labour market trends. The Job Futures publications, produced cooperatively by EIC and provincial government agencies, are the most popular source of information on labour market trends. However, it is felt that this information reaches far too few actual decision makers in its current format.

There is concern that before they can help students and adults learn about current and projected labour market trends, teachers, counsellors and career practitioners must learn much more themselves. There is consensus that parents could be extremely helpful to their children in the career planning process if the had the information they needed. There is agreement that clients, and their helpers, need dramatically expanded opportunities for experiential learning about career options (job-shadowing, work experience, mentoring, co-operative education). Several participants warned that simply providing better information, without teaching people (professionals and their clients) how to use it, is inadequate. Several pointed to the labour-intensity of computer-based career exploration systems as a problem in an era of high counsellor-client ratios. As well, many expressed frustration that at a time when career decision makers need more help than ever, career practitioner positions are being cut. Some argue that more and better trained helpers are needed even more than more information. Also, many participants felt they needed to know more about new initiatives in this field, like the CAMCRY Pandora and KYAC projects, Nelson Canada's new Canadian edition of DISCOVER, ISM Careerware's CHOICES CT, Pixel Production's Skills and Electronic Horizons, and others.

There is broad agreement with the principle that cooperation in the development and distribution of career information resources offers substantial quality and cost benefits. Moreover, career information experts across Canada would like to have a forum for regular sharing of ideas and expertise in this domain across jurisdictional boundaries. However, participants during the exploratory round of meetings agreed that a voluntary CIP network must be built upon a foundation of initial successes with a few relatively modest (in terms of money, time and organizational resources) projects.

Among the short-term projects participants considered included:

- collaboration on a new series of occupational monographs, perhaps blending the current independent efforts in this area of Employment and Immigration Canada, Alberta Career Development and Employment, the Guidance Centre (O.I.S.E.) and other agencies;

- development of end-user versions of the NOC to compliment the publications currently being developed for professionals. These publications would be to the NOC what the U.S. Occupational Outlook Handbook and Quarterly are to the American Dictionary of Occupational Titles.

- collaboration on revisions to, and widespread dissemination of, existing career information products (such as Electronic Horizons, Skills, CHOICES, PC Directions, DISCOVER, Pandora, KYAC);

- development of comprehensive provincial/territorial and national inventories of career information resources and services;

- development of career tabloids for annual distribution to households;

There was general agreement that career tabloids offer the most promising vehicle to short-term, high impact success for the CIP network. Career tabloids were first introduced by State Occupational Information Coordinating Committees (SOICCs) in the United States over ten years ago, and are now a popular annual career and labour market information delivery vehicle in over thirty states. They are printed on newsprint, and delivered annually to households throughout the state, as well as being bulk-distributed to schools and other agencies. The closest Canadian equivalent to state career tabloids to date has been "Jobs For Your Future," a career magazine produced most recently in 1988 by Bridging the Gap with EIC funding.

Career tabloids typically contain profiles on 200 or more occupations which include general descriptions of the work performed, future outlook projections, earnings, suggested high school subjects and educational and training programs, and listings of institutions offering appropriate programs. They include a variety of appealing "how to" articles about the career planning process, including exercises and quizzes to help readers explore their interests, values, skills and career goals. As well they include information on national and regional labour force trends, what employers are looking for in prospective employees, information for special groups (like women, older workers, visible minorites, the disadvantaged), local contact information for public and private agencies which provide career-related services, and much more.

Career tabloids provide an opportunity for on-going inter-agency collaboration in the development of a popular, inexpensive career information delivery vehicle which benefits vast numbers of people, each year. They reach business and labour leaders, workers in all sectors, students, the unemployed, and result in discussions among family members in their homes. They provide basic information which helps people take charge of their careers. They help adults help each other, and their children, in career planning. Much of the information people across Canada need is common. Therefore, a core national publication can be developed by CIP which can then be "localized" by provincial and territorial CIPs. This appeared to all concerned to be the ideal vehicle initially to bring together all potential CIP partners.

Strategic Planning Meeting - CIP Inaugural Meeting

A two-day CIP strategic planning meeting was held in Ottawa on January 19 - 20, 1992. There were 37 full-time participants, with an additional three people participating only during the first day. Represented were the federal government (EIC), nine provincial governments (Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick, Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia), one territorial government (Northwest Territories), the US federal government (NOICC) and two state governments (Michigan and Oregon). Also in attendance were representatives of the Stay-In-School Initiative and the Canadian Guidance and Counselling Foundation CAMCRY initiative.

All provinces and territories represented agreed in principle to collaborate on the development of career tabloids aimed at Canadian households. This decision was based upon the following:

- virtually all Canadians require career and labour market information, either for their personal use, or to help their spouses, children, relatives, employees or acquaintances with career planning and transitions

- empowering individuals to optimize their career potential is the basic building block of human resource, labour force and economic development;

- if creatively developed, packaged, distributed and promoted, career tabloids will reach, and help, vast numbers of Canadians;

- the tabloid project is in harmony with the fundamental missions, and will assist the clients, of all potential CIP partners;

- the documented success of the tabloid experience in more than half of the U.S. states;

- with a broad spectrum of Canadian and U.S. partners freely sharing information and expertise, essentially all content for exemplary Canadian tabloids has already been written; and

- career tabloids can be produced in the short-term, at minimal cost to participating agencies; and

- the general appeal of the tabloid project is drawing together potential CIP partners more effectively than any other project discussed to date. Its success will provide the impetus for other collaborative projects.

It was agreed that the tabloid will be an all-inclusive, broad-based publication encompassing timely career information and variety of articles and features on labour market trends, the career planning process and education and training options, written to appeal to individual members in every family across Canada.

Suggested articles or content areas include:

- How to use the tabloid
- About 200 occupational profiles (job description, future outlook, earnings, education and training, institutions) with data localized in provincial and territorial tabloids
- The career planning process (Including self-scored checklists and exercises to point readers to personally relevant articles, resources, programs and services)
- Readily available resources (agencies, programs, services, publications) to assist readers at all stages of the career planning process and job search process
- How family members can help each other in career planning
- Major global and national labour market and demographic trends
- The Canadian labour force development strategy
- The basic skills and attitudes now sought by employers - checklist for success - reasons people get fired
- High school course selection - one of the most important sets of career decisions
- Career pathing - how to move up or over from entry level jobs, especially in the service sector

- The job search process (resumes, covering letters, applications, prospecting, telephone skills, interviews)
- Women in non traditional careers
- Profiles of specific occupational clusters and industry sectors, perhaps with biographical profiles
- The downsizing and lay-off phenomenon
- Occupational training - lifelong learning
- Challenges for disadvantaged groups and older workers
- Apprenticeship and trades training
- Staying in school and returning to school - need for science, math, trades and technologies - the correlation between educational attainment and unemployment
- Unemployment, social assistance and welfare
- Spotlight on new initiatives for career planners and helpers (provincial youth strategies, career-related curriculum initiatives, CAMCRY)
- Entrepreneurship and intrapreneurship
- Community agencies and initiatives, including career resource centres, industry-education partnerships, chambers of commerce, industrial training committees
- Career initiatives in business and industry
- Educational and training opportunities and agencies (public and private) with sources of financial aid

Developing a plan of action for career tabloids which would satisfy the needs of diverse jurisdictions and agencies presented the biggest challenge for participants at the inaugural CIP meeting. It was clear that it would be easier for those agencies with the expertise, resources and infrastructures in place (like the federal government and a few provinces) to proceed independently. However, it was felt that CIP and its career tabloid initiative are important, and highly visible examples of the partnership spirit Canadians must embrace to prosper in today's highly competitive global community. Participants' resolve to make CIP a success was strengthened by the encouragement of representatives of the occupational information coordinating committee network in the United States. Indeed, their thoughtful participation throughout the meeting was a major factor in its success. CIP partners agree that strong links must be established and maintained between the Canadian and U.S. networks.

Participants decided that, as a first step in the evolution of CIP, a national career information tabloid will be produced in 1992. Employment and Immigration Canada will provide leadership and funding support for the development of the national tabloid, and will cost-share with participating provinces and territories the development and distribution of provincial and territorial versions of the tabloid. Phillip Jarvis has been contracted by the Occupational and Career Information Branch of EIC as National CIP Coordinator. Allen Sackmann has been assigned by EIC as Editorial Coordinator for the tabloid project.

CIP is now:

- establishing working relationships with new provincial and territorial CIPs;
- developing the career tabloid project plan and budget;
- putting in place necessary publishing resources and expertise to develop design and layout concepts and produce the national career tabloid;
- liaising with labour market information providers and assembling material for the national career tabloid from national sources, provincial partners and the NOICC/SOICC network in the United States;
- establishing a national editorial policy board (with representatives from provincial and territorial CIPs);
- establishing national editorial review procedures for the tabloid project (with a tabloid editorial review coordinator in every provincial and territorial CIP);
- promoting the CIP and national career tabloid concepts with public and private sector agencies concerned with labour force, human resources and economic development;
- exploring sponsorship options for printing, distribution and promotion;

Provincial and territorial participants at the inaugural CIP meeting will use CIP's career tabloid project to draw together organizations in their provinces and territories that share an interest in getting good career information to as many Canadians as possible. Steps that are now being taken include:

- designating individuals as provincial and territorial CIP Coordinators to promote the CIP concept, organize regular CIP meetings, and build fruitful partnerships for development and distribution of exemplary career information materials;

- establishing the nucleus of a provincial or territorial career tabloid project team around individuals with career information expertise, writing and editorial review skills, and appointing a tabloid coordinator;

- reviewing tentative tabloid articles/contents, and establishing provincial/territorial content priorities;

- identifying exemplary articles or papers on high priority themes, and forwarding these, with recommendations on content priorities to CIP;

- developing provincial inventories of career resources.

Among other collaborative initiatives which are expected to follow the success of the tabloid project are the development of:

- national and provincial career information databases;
- integrated national and provincial career information delivery systems with print, video and computer-based career information products sharing common databases;
- national and provincial career information development guidelines;
- training systems and resources to teach educators, career practitioners, parents and career decision makers how best to use available career information resources;

Provincial and territorial CIPs will be emerging across Canada during the coming months. The first generation of the national tabloid will be completed by late summer of 1992, with provincial and territorial versions ready for distribution during Canada Career Week (CCW), November 1 - 7, 1992. Updated and enhanced releases of both the national and provincial tabloids are envisaged for at least five consecutive years. Other collaborative CIP projects will be underway before long. Those interested in further information are encouraged to contact any of the CIP coordinators below:

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